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# PIVOT

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## Realizing Socio-Economic Development Potential of CPEC



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## National Conference on 'Pakistan-China Economic Relations: Next Level'

By Dr. Nazish Mahmood

China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a one-day National Conference titled 'Pakistan-China Economic Relations: Next Level' on March 6, 2019. The objective of the conference was to generate ideas in pursuit of the socio-economic development agenda agreed upon by the leadership of Pakistan and China during the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China in November, 2018. H.E. Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs graced the inaugural session as Chief Guest. The Conference brought together academics, experts, diplomats and representatives from various universities and organizations from across the country.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI opened the inaugural session with introductory remarks followed by address by Commercial Consular of China Dr. Wang Zhihua who spoke on behalf of the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Yao Jing.





Welcoming the guests and participants, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry applauded the leadership of Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi for his conduct in handling the recent India-Pakistan crisis. Highlighting the unique friendship, Ambassador Aizaz underlined that Pakistan and China share an enviable history of all-weather friendship and it has deepened despite changes in international environment.

The bilateral cooperation has expanded from strategic domain to economic ties. He underscored that there is an emerging consensus that both countries need to further expand the level of economic cooperation to areas of human development and it was in this backdrop that the Conference was conceived. Ambassador Chaudhry hoped the Conference and its outcome with participation of speakers from all provinces of Pakistan as well as representatives of various China-focused institutes and centres would contribute in the form of actionable suggestions

and recommendations for policy-makers and stakeholders in both capitals.

Commercial Consular of China Dr. Wang Zhihua speaking on behalf of the Chinese Ambassador, H.E. Mr. Yao Jing, thanked the institute for holding a national conference on a theme of great importance for bilateral relationship. Emphasizing on Pakistan-China economic cooperation, he stated that besides being a trading partner, China is also the largest source of Pakistan's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for the past five years. He noted that first phase of CPEC under which 23 projects worth \$19 billion have been either completed or are construction.



He apprised that during the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China a new consensus was achieved on expanding cooperation in the human and social sector development, hence next phase of CPEC shall stress on socio-economic cooperation with focus on areas like agriculture, education, health, poverty alleviation and vocational training. He expressed hope that with the deepening of China-Pakistan economic





cooperation, next level of our bilateral relations will not only benefit the two countries but also benefit the whole region.

H.E. Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs commended the Institute of Strategic Studies for holding a national conference on a subject that is high on the agenda of the government.



He congratulated the re-vitalized China-Pakistan Study Centre of the Institute for leading the series of activities to deepen Pakistan's partnership with China and welcomed constructive ideas for promoting tangible economic cooperation between Pakistan and China. Foreign Minister praised the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and China in terms of what President Xi calls 'iron brother'. This friendship is premised on shared values and interests and Pakistanis regard this relationship as a central component of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Together, both countries are successfully countering forces opposed to regional peace. He expressed admiration for the sound advice by the Chinese leadership in the post Pulwama crisis for India and Pakistan to engage in a dialogue and resolve their disputes through peaceful means. Foreign Minister underscored that CPEC has infused greater depth to relationship with China and the leadership of the two countries has identified a new vision, a new development agenda that takes economic cooperation to a whole new level of engagement. The Government wishes to expand cooperation to areas such as science and technology, agriculture, social sector cooperation, blue economy, people to people contact and cultural linkages, and finding mutually beneficial ways of boosting Pakistan's industrial capacity along with broadening the export base. In the end, Foreign Minister welcomed effective platforms, such as

this Conference, where young minds, thinkers and scholars come together to interact and produce constructive ideas.

Following the inaugural session, the working sessions of national conference commenced. The conference was divided into three sessions. First session titled 'Next Level of Economic Cooperation' was chaired by Dr. Safdar Sohail, DG National Institute of Management whereas participants were Dr. Fazal ur Rehman of University of Sargodha, Dr. Nadia Farooq of Asian Development Bank, Mr. Yasir Masood of CPEC Centre of Excellence, and Mr. Muhammad Abbas Hassan of ISSI. The second session titled 'Leveraging Regional Connectivity for Development' was chaired by Mr. Muhammad Zubair Ghorri, former member of the Planning Commission and the panellists included Dr. Huma Baqai of Institute of Business Administration, Dr. Zahid Anwar of University of Peshawar, Dr. Ghulam Akbar Mahesar of University of Sindh, Jamshoro and Dr. Fida Mohammad Bazai of University of Balochistan. The last session titled, 'Realizing Socio-Economic Development' was chaired by Senator Lt. Gen.(R) Abdul Qayyum whereas Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt of Government College University, Dr. Samina Sabir of AJK University, Dr. Saranjam Baig of Karakorum International University and Syed Tanvir Abbas Jafri of COMSATS University, Islamabad were the panellists.



The speakers expressed their views on the subject and a question answer session was held at the end of each session. In the end Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors of the Institute thanked the speakers and the participants of the conference ■